

PERS 77-323

21 JAN 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR : Deputy Director for Administration

FROM : William W. Wells  
Deputy Director for Operations

SUBJECT : MAG Report to the DDCI on Personnel  
Management, dated 7 December 1976

1. It goes without saying that this Directorate supports the existence of a fair and objective personnel management system in CIA, but at the outset we want to state our belief that the Agency's personnel management system and the DDO's career management system are both basically sound. We also believe that the DDO personnel evaluation system, which has been in being since 1970, is working well, but the Agency MAG apparently does not realize the extent of the effort which we are devoting to insuring that it is fair and equitable.

2. That said, it is our belief that the Directorate's personnel management system must always be evolving. Supporting the Director of Personnel in that manner is the overall means by which we can lend our full support to the improvement of Agency-wide policies. So while we will always welcome well thought-out recommendations from the MAG, we believe the differences we would have with some of MAG's views would be chiefly ones of methodology.

3. The tone of the MAG paper is distressing in that it seems to impugn less than good faith on the part of the Agency management. To describe the advice which the DDCI gets through official channels as terribly bland is hard to understand. This does, we believe, reflect among some personnel an obsession or preoccupation with what they believe to be due them mostly in terms of pay, promotion

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and perquisites. What seems to be lacking is a corresponding positive attitude on the part of many of our people as to what they owe the Agency as employees (and adults). Missing in the MAG memorandum is any hint of the dedication to the job that has been characteristic of this Organization -- of being "taken up with the mission of the Agency", a dedication fortified with an instinctive sense of purpose and a desire to exhibit excellence in performance. Almost forgotten, it seems, is the knowledge that CIA pays its employees more abundantly for their talents than do many other government agencies, and that there are employee benefits and a government retirement system probably second to none.

4. A major problem is probably that the Agency's personnel management system is not sufficiently understood by a great many employees. Many in the DDO do not study carefully or even read policy guidance which is made available on a regular basis. Hence, employees do not understand well enough, for example, the principle of comparative evaluation of employees, the difference between a grievance and an EEO action. More instructional pieces of paper are not necessary to solve the problem, because it seems to us that the Office of Personnel has done exceedingly well in publicizing by notice and by forum the new goals outlined in the Personnel Approaches Study Group. Instead, the solution to this attitudinal problem rests, we believe, with both the supervisors and the supervised. As we have indicated, DDO employees must assume the obligation of seeing that they inform themselves better, but equally important is the assumption of still more management responsibility by supervisors in my Directorate, some of whom have not fully come to grips with their obligations as personnel supervisors. We plan to reinforce with my staff and division chiefs the need for supervisors to see that their branches, desks, or sections are well informed of personnel policies and programs and the [redacted] contents. We agree that supervisors must be rated by top-level management on more than their ability to pass out the orders, manage the operations and get the intelligence production in disseminable form. We still find evidence of the old syndrome among my people -- let the Personnel Officer do it.

5. Employee morale appears to be the watchword throughout the MAG paper; it seems to say that employee morale is equated almost solely with promotions. The lack of promotion, according to MAG, is mostly the "fault" of management. Many DDO employees are unrealistic in their own career expectations. Some of this is because of a lack of candor on the part of their first, second and third echelon supervisors. In fact, since the establishment of career counsellors several years ago in the Career Management Group, there has been a tendency to "delegate" the major counselling responsibility to Evaluation Board Vice Chairmen. Our Career Management Staff has not found that employees are called in regularly enough by their immediate supervisors for counselling sessions.

6. We wish to comment on the matter of procedures or policy for judging new employees in their first few years on board. As the Office of Personnel comment on the MAG paper has noted, the Agency does have diminishing human resources and non-diminishing responsibilities. Thus, we need the best quality people we can hire. Due to our lack of firm enough management policies in the DDO in the past, there are a number of marginal performers who have little future potential. In fact, there are instances when there are not enough properly qualified people to meet staffing requirements. To avoid the heartburn of having "non-essentials" on board in future years, it is our belief that the Executive Advisory Group, with the advice of the Director of Personnel, should consider reinstituting the one-time practice (about 1959-1973) of giving new employees a three-year Provisional Appointment. It could be a logical extension of [REDACTED] 10 January 1977 in which Mr. Knoche reminds all components of their responsibilities toward new employees and the early assessment of these people. As you will recall, under the Provisional Appointment system, at the end of the third year the head of an operating component was asked to indicate simply by his signature whether a "Provisional Employee" should be retained and given a permanent appointment. It is believed correct to say that there were few if any turn-downs of people at least in the DDO. However, if the plan were reinstituted with the requirement that the head of operating component had to make a case in writing for or against the retention of such an employee (based on performance and estimated potential) we would be taking a forward step in our personnel management system Agency-wide. Perhaps the views of other Deputy Directors should be solicited.

7. Brief comments on several of the more important points discussed by the MAG in its paper follow:

a. Separate Career Service Board for Rotatees:

A separate evaluation board for persons on rotational assignments is not judged necessary to insure adequate recognition of the contributions of such officers. On the contrary, we have endorsed the career-enhancing value of rotational assignments and so instruct the DDO Personnel Evaluation Boards to view them in very positive terms. The concept of a separate Rotatee Board, as described by the MAG, takes into consideration the career development of the employee, but MAG's view would not be fair to the home base element if the Rotatee Board were authorized to promote even in the face of a different view by the parent career service.

b. Senior Assignments:

We will keep an open mind about the recommendation that a special board be responsible for the assignment of individuals at the GS-14 level and above. However, our preference as of now is to proceed with the plan of identifying a limited number (50) of "key positions" for which the EAG would be responsible to recommend nominees to the DDCI. If the EAG decides to review assignments of all 430 supergrades, it should probably be done with the advice of a small inter-directorate working group chaired by the Director of Personnel. I prefer that assignment responsibility for GS-14 and GS-15's remain in the hands of Deputy Directors and Heads of Independent Offices, because by and large we know the performance and potential of such employees pretty well. Perhaps, those who disagree with the idea of leaving GS-14 and GS-15 assignments to the Directorates will continue to say that cronyism still abounds in the making of appointments. On the other hand, here in the DDO, we now have centralized overview of all GS-15 assignments by the Career Management Staff and our planning calls for applying the same practice to GS-14 employees as soon as possible. We are moving toward a more centralized assignment system at these levels because it has great merit and is another step to improve Directorate personnel management.

c. Comparative Rankings:

We continue to view the relative ranking of any employee by a DDO Personnel Evaluation Board to be a personal, private matter of the individual concerned. Component chiefs are aware only of those whom the Boards recommend for promotion or whom the Boards find in the Low Percentile. To place the Board rankings on the Fitness Report is not recommended. DDO Career Counsellors inform any Low 20 Per Cent employee orally of his relative ranking if that ranking is attributable to poor performance and low potential. Other officers, who are in the Low 20 Per Cent primarily for statistical reasons, are informed at the discretion of the Board Vice Chairmen. Having a ranking in writing on a fitness report could be prejudicial over the long run to anyone reviewing an employee's official file. It should be remembered that rankings are done annually on the basis of an employee's performance and potential at that point in time; it is the practice of DDO Personnel Evaluation Boards to accomplish their rankings independently of any knowledge of what previous boards have determined.

d. Quality Step Increases and Other Awards:

We strongly support the use of such awards. The DDO's Honor and Merit Award Board has been operating well, encouraging recognition for excellence and seeking in my behalf to see that the program is operated with a uniformity of criteria. We do not consider our procedures complicated and burdensome. As a check on component chiefs, Evaluation Boards are charged with recommending independently the awarding of QSI's or honor awards. Both systems have technical and judgmental checks to prevent abuses.

e. Specialists:

We can speak only for this Directorate, but we have a need for specialists. Because of that proven need, we have established two particular categories of officers for Evaluation Boards to judge: Operations Specialists and (non-operating) Special Skills. Both are needed in the DO; furthermore, our Evaluation Board Handbook provides for the upward progress of selected individuals without there being a requirement that they be top-notch managers.

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f. EEO:

This Directorate is in gear and in tune, as you know, with Equal Employment Opportunity and we spend a lot of time at it. Frankly, how more public and personal we can get about our intent to make the EEO program more successful is baffling. We are convinced that if indeed there are those who, by their official actions, are practicing discrimination, they will be found out. The Directorate is committed to the operation of a fair and just program; certainly there is no intent to hurt anyone. Our staff suggests that the issuance of more bulletins, notices and instructions concerning grievances and complaints does little good because people generally fail to read them.

g. New EOD's:

We have referred above to the idea of reinstituting the Provisional Appointment system with a decision being made at the end of three years about the retention of an employee. As for personnel at the professional level, their entry on duty and training is well planned. However, for secretarial, clerical and other personnel such as records keepers, it is recommended that they be placed in orientation, indoctrination and training courses which they will complete before they ever see their first offices of assignment. Upon the employees' arrival on their first assignments, their supervisors should be charged (and rated) on handling of the new personnel.

8. As you have said in your memorandum of 4 January, the MAG paper questions the basic personnel management system of the Agency. One of the views of the MAG paper is that the Office of Personnel cannot develop or implement personnel policy from its current place in the bureaucratic structure. However, in actual practice, in my opinion, the Director of Personnel always has had direct access to the DCI at any time on any matter of personnel policy.

9. Finally, well intentioned as we know the MAG paper to be, it seems that its members are not very well informed concerning

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personnel management. Despite my seeming to question whether more publicity will be of help to our employees, we do feel that we can make additional efforts to expand communications within the DDO, especially with respect to our Personnel Evaluation Board System. Our Chief, Career Management Staff will set up a series of employee forums in the auditorium to explain the DDO Personnel Evaluation System in as much detail as is required.

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cc: D/Pers

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